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Senior Medicare Patrol Volunteers Help Prevent Scams

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New scams seem to emerge every day, and Medicare isn't immune. Scam artists use stolen Medicare numbers to bill Medicare for virtually any service. Most people don't even realize items are being fraudulently billed to Medicare under their Medicare number.

That's where Nebraska's Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) comes in. SMP in the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services relies on volunteers to educate seniors on how to prevent, identify and report health care fraud and abuse or billing errors.

SMP volunteers visit senior centers, retirement communities and other organizations to encourage older people to guard their personal information, to be aware of fraudulent offers on medical equipment, and to carefully review their benefit statements.

The good news is that there are simple steps you can take to protect yourself.

Watch billing statements for charges for something you didn't get, billings for the same thing twice, and services that were never ordered by your doctor.

It's important to protect your personal information by making sure you:

- Treat your Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security number like a credit card number;
- Don't carry your Medicare or Medicaid card unless you need it; and
- Save Medicare Summary Notices and Part D Explanation of Benefits and shred them when they're no longer needed.

If you or someone you know thinks they've been scammed, or to get information on being a SMP volunteer, call 1-800-942-7830 or go to www.dhhs.ne.gov/smp